



American
Spaces

True or False? Assessing the News

Programming Kit

REAL OR FAKE?

News comes from **reputable sources** and is based on **verifiable evidence**. Most often real news stories can be found on **multiple reputable news sites**.

False news is **not verifiable or based on factual evidence**. Often the writers or publishers have **motives other than informing the public**.

WHAT IS THE BIG DEAL?

In recent years, false news stories have spread quickly on social media and other websites. It can be difficult to know what is real and what is false. Believing false information could lead to making important choices, expressing opinions, or sharing stories based on incorrect information.

HOW TO SPOT FALSE STORIES?

Consider the Source: Who wrote the article? Was it an expert or professional journalist? Who published the article? What was the publisher's agenda?

Consider the Purpose of the Article: Was the article a joke? A persuasive article? An informative article?

Check for Visual Cues: What does the URL look like? Does the website look professional? Often false news articles online try to look like familiar websites and URLs, but there are small mistakes.

Talk to People: What do others think? Have they heard of the issue being discussed in the article?

"Triangulate": Check to see if the information is the same on different websites, or consult a fact-checking website.

THINGS TO DISCUSS

What should a government's role be?

Should it censor false news? Should it try to stop the production of false news?

What should an individual's role be?

Is it okay to spread false news to reach your goal? When is it ok to call something false news?

What is a social media company's role?

Should social media companies stop false news?

What about freedom of speech?

Shouldn't people have a right to say what they believe?





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INTRODUCTION (10-15 min)

1. Prepare your own screenshots of real and fake headlines.
2. Have the group vote on which they believe are real or fake.

INTERMEDIATE: "Shareworthy?" (intro + 30-60 min)

1. Introduce topic, with fact sheet or "Introduction" activity.
 2. Provide three articles for discussion (one or two should be false news).
 3. Group vote and discussion on what is real and what is disinformation.
 4. Group discussion on possible outcomes if the story is shared.
- [ACTIVITY LINK](#)

INTERMEDIATE: "What if we were in charge?" (intro + 30-45 min)

1. Introduce topic, with fact sheet or the "Introduction" activity.
2. Ask one group to discuss and decide on what policies if any they would adopt as a social media company. Ask the other to do the same for a government.
3. Have each group present their choices and discuss with the other group.

ADVANCED: "President Lincoln and Fake News" (intro + 45-60 min)

1. Introduce topic, with fact sheet or "Introduction" activity.
 2. Pass out Lincoln case study for reading.
 3. Split into groups, review primary sources, create argument.
 4. Groups present arguments.
- [ACTIVITY and RESOURCE LINK](#)

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

THE NEWSEUM

Provides excellent activities, videos and primary sources that can be used in programming around fake news and First Amendment freedom of speech.

THE CENTER FOR NEWS LITERACY

Provides excellent curriculum, videos and a MOOC on news literacy. All of these resources could easily be used in a program.

PBS LEARNING MEDIA

Provides videos and articles that can be used in programming.

AMERICAN SPACES RESOURCES

Opposing View Points in Context

- [ShareAmerica](#)

